

Ring WorldHALO

by DarkArbiter

Category: Halo

Genre: Adventure, Sci-Fi

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2005-05-26 00:27:09

Updated: 2005-05-26 00:27:09

Packaged: 2016-04-27 00:53:16

Rating: T

Chapters: 4

Words: 16,778

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Why am I here? How did I get here? Who...AM I? This strange ring world... I have begun to doubt the meaning of my existence... I don't know how much the Master Cheif knows about me, but it's dangerous. Who I am; WHAT I am...they should stay away from.

1. Lost Memory

CHAPTER 1 - LOST MEMORY

I had just woken up on the strange, ring world. And I had very little knowledge of my past. There were strange plug-like things on the back of my neck, on my arms and legs, and down my back, but I didn't know what they were for. The strange wolf's tail that swayed behind me as a got up and walked across the rock terrain didn't have much meaning to me, either. I kept walking for hours without seeing any form of intelligent life, so I decided to lie down on a flat boulder. The stone was warm from the sun and I fell asleep within a few minutes.

I woke up to the sound of an aircraft over head and sat up. I sat up and stared at it blankly as it landed about ten feet away and unloaded a dozen Marines. One saw me and shouted, "Hey kid! What are you doing here? It's dangerous. Who are you?" I just stood up, looked at him, and creased my eyebrows in confusion. "Hey...that kid has a tail. Weird, huh?" one of the Marines whispered to his comrade. I looked towards the opening of the drop-ship just as a man in green armor came out and walked up to me.

"Can you tell me who you are and what you're doing here, kid?" he said as he tilted his head slightly to one side.

I shook my head and said, "I have no idea. I don't know what I'm doing here or _how _I got here. I don't even know who I am." I swayed my tail from side to side, and pointed to where I came from. "I just woke up over there a few hours ago..."

"Hmm..." He then looked over to the drop-ship and shouted to the pilot, "Foehammer, can you take this kid back to the butte?"

Before the pilot could answer, I said, "No. It seems like you guys are about to go into a fight." I looked around and found a discarded plasma pistol. "I need to remember who I am and what I'm doing here... I feel this might help."

The man in the green armor motioned to the plasma pistol and asked, "You sure you know how to work that thing?" I just grinned, turned around, spotted a bird flying about twelve meters away, charged, and fired. The plasma bolt hit dead-on and the bird fell to the ground. I turned around as one of the Marines said, "Holy shit!" The armored man looked at the toasted bird on the ground then looked back at me. "You don't know who you are, but you know how to wield Covenant weapons?"

I raised an eyebrow when he said Covenant, but just said, "I don't have any memory of _myself, _but I have memories of how to do things. This is one of them."

"Ok then." He put out his hand and I shook it. "I'm the Master Chief. Since you don't know who you are, we'll just call you Kid till you do."

One of the Marines in the front of the group that I guessed was the Sergeant motioned forward and shouted, "C'mon, Marines! We've got Covenant to fry and information to obtain!" A few of the Marines shouted "Yes sir!" and we were off. I stayed close to the rear and looked around at my new surroundings. I noticed the Chief staring at me from time to time, but didn't really care. We turned a corner and a Marine shouted, "Enemy contact!" as he fired his assault weapon.

I dashed through the group of short, squealing creatures that I remembered calling _Grunts _and got up onto a boulder, letting the Marines handle the small fries. I looked down the hill at the tall, metallic structure that the Covenant seemed to be guarding. Seeing a black-clad Elite standing by himself on a platform with large stairs leading up to it, I ran down the hill at a startling speed and as I got close, jumped. But I didn't go to the second step as I thought I would. I jumped _high. _Even a few feet above the Elite. He looked up and roared in surprise as I landed on his shoulders and snapped his neck with my feet. I landed on both feet as the Elite fell to the ground with a slight _thump _and a few Jackals and Elites came to investigate, but stopped when they saw me. They didn't fire. They didn't even _attack _as I stood there, staring down at the fallen Elite. They just stood there and stared as if shocked by something until the Marines came rushing down, firing their assault rifles and M6D pistols.

It took about fifteen minutes for the Marines to clear the area of Covenant forces, and I was still sitting down, staring the dead Covenant. The Marines and the Master Chief came over and looked down at the Elite. Some of the Marines were whispering among themselves and each other. I heard things like; "Did you see that kid?" "Yeah. He just flew through the air and then cracked the Elite's neck!" I didn't even look up when the Chief said, "I saw what you did. Do you know _how _you did that? You jumped as far as any Spartan could, maybe even farther, and you cracked that Elite's neck without any effort. There's no way any human could do that."

"I don't know, ok? I don't know!" That's when Sergeant Johnson came over and said, "C'mon, Chief. Leave the poor kid alone." Then he added, "The database is over there. We should extract what we need and get the hell outta here and back to Alpha Base." I got up and followed the rest of the group to where Johnson was talking about. I looked around and found a large monitor that had data streaming across it. But when I touched it, the data stopped and something appeared in a different language. A coil came out of the dashboard and went around, behind me. I cried out in pain as it found its way into the back of my neck.

POV Change - Master Chief

The Master Chief spun around at the sound of the cry. There were images streaming across the screen of the monitor and the kid's eyes were glowing a bright green. One of the Marines shouted, "What the hell? What is that?" Sergeant Johnson stepped up and shouted, "What are you waiting for? Let's get that thing out of him!" He was about to reach for the wire when John put his hand up.

"Cortana?" the Chief asked expectantly.

The AI's voice came on his HUD. "I'm not quite sure. It seems to be...some kind of _memory transfusion..._ But I don't know why that kid's _memory _would be stored on HALO..."

The Chief watched as the memories flickered across the screen and frowned. Some of the images were quite disturbing. That's when the John saw something he _really _didn't like, and debated on whether he should pull the plug or not. He chose _yes _when the loading got to 7, and yanked the coil out of the kid's neck.

POV Change - Zak

I fell to the ground and tried to catch my breath. _What the hell _was _that? _I looked up as the Master Chief said, "Kid, what do you remember." Then it hit me. I _knew _things... I stood up and said, "My name Zakery Alexander Kumashiro. I live in West Shinjuku, Japan. I'm a 9th grader at Oshiwa High School. I remember some stuff about my family and friends as well... But nothing else."

The Chief sighed and turned away as a female voice came on his HUD. "Well at least he knows who he is."

I looked up again. "Huh? Who said that?" The Chief turned to mean and asked, "You _heard_ that?" I looked around and answered. "Yeah, I heard that. Who was it?"

The female voice came again as the AI spoke to me now. "I am Cortana. Once the AI of the ship, _Pillar of Autumn_, and now I travel with the Chief, here. It's very strange that you can hear my speaking without an HUD..." Her voice trailed off as she tried to figure this out.

I was trying to figure out how I lost my memory and why I would find it stored _here. _Wherever _here _was... It didn't make much sense. I sighed as I noticed the Marines staring at me again. They would always look away when I took notice, and I think some of them were afraid of me. Sergeant Johnson had had enough and said, "Alright,

people. We got what we came for." Then he switched to the comchannel, "Foehammer, we need immediate pick up."

"Affirmative, Sergeant." The pilot of the drop-ship paused to look at her map and then said, "There's a clearing north of your position. I'll pick you boys up there."

"Roger that, Foehammer." The Chief answered. Then he turned to the rest of the group. "Let's move, Marines. We don't want any of our alien friends to decide and drop by while we're still here." He turned and started walking in the direction that I guessed was north. I sighed and looked back at where the dead Elite lay before following the rest of the group.

POV Change - Covenant

"What!" Field Master, Tuno Tonkomee roared in anger. "Are you saying that a single _human _took down one of our best soldiers with his bare hands!" An extremely brave Grunt stepped up and correcting the golden-armored Elite by telling him that the human had used his feet. It shrunk back and lowered its gaze as the Field Master roared again and shouted, "Do not correct me! Next time, I'll take that methane mask from your face and laugh as you die!" Tonkomee turned to a Jackal sitting at the controls of the view screen and ordered, "Show me the footage of the attack in sector 57! I want to take a look at this _human boy..."

The screen switched the battle in sector 57 and the Jackal rewound it to before the humans came. The picture zoomed in on the commando Elite on the platform, showed him being killed, and froze on the image of the boy. Tonkomee's eyes widened. "This is impossible..." he whispered to himself. He turned to his troops and gave another order. "Find that boy. Bring him here, but do _not _harm him. Kill any other human there. Now go..."

The troops hesitated, then started out, leaving Tonkomee alone in front of the screen.

POV Change - Zak

The pelican dropped us off at a pyramid-looking, metallic structure with military personnel guarding post. _This must be Alpha Base... _I sighed and one of the men saluted, "Welcome back, Chief. Who's the kid?"

The Master Chief returned the salute and replied, "We found him near the structure that we got information from. His name's Zak Kumashiro, but he can't remember much else."

"Huh... Poor kid." The Marine looked at me and I raised an eyebrow. "Does he even know _how _he got here?" The Master Chief shook his head, the Marine saluted again, and walked away. I had just sat down when another Marine came running down a ramp leading into a room. The man saluted and said, "Sir! We've captured a man in strange, golden armor that claims to be from the future. He says he's a Spartan..."

"What?" The Chief followed the Marine up the ramp and I decided to tag along.

POV Change - Master Chief

John ran up the ramp, behind the Marine, and was lead into a jail room with energy cells. The Chief told the Marine at the controls to turn the energy off, and when it was he walked up to the man in the gold armor. "Who are you?"

The man looked up but did not take off his helmet. His armor, the Chief noticed, looked like that of a golden Elite's. When the man spoke, the Master Chief could tell that he was most-likely human. "I cannot tell you my name, but I assure you, I am on your side." His voice was low and husky. "I have come from the year 2612 and am part of the SPARTAN IV project. There is a terrible danger that I need to tell you about." He then took off his helmet. His hair was dark gray, his eyes were a piercing blue, and there was a long scar down the right side of his face. "You may not believe me," he continued, "but the darkness lies within a boy..."

The Chief turned away from the other "Spartan" when someone said, "Hey, look. The kid's tail changed. It's not a wolf's tail like the last time I saw him." He looked over at the kid, who was looking down at his tail in confusion, and raised an eyebrow. Zak's tail now looked like it belonged to a large snake instead of a wolf. The Master Chief spun around as the man in the golden armor came rushing out of the cell, eyes wide.

The man pointed at Zak and shouted, "You! You are the great evil! You are the darkness that killed my family and so many others!"

Zak stared at the man a bit blankly, but startled, and asked, "Do I know you? And I didn't kill anyone! Besides, didn't you say you came from the future? I can't even remember my past!"

"Heh... No memory, huh?" The man stepped closer and a small spike came out of his wrist plate. "You want to know what you did! Then here!" The man stepped forward and jammed the spike into the back of Zak's neck.

POV Change - Zak

I felt the stab of pain in the back of my neck, but didn't have time to react. Streams of images started flooding my mind. Destruction everywhere, corpses sprawled all over the place and twisted in ways not thought possible, fire, black rain, blood... There was something else, too. Something I couldn't quite make out... The Covenant? The spike was yanked from me and I fell to the ground. I heard the man's voice, and some angry shouts, but it all seemed so far away...

"You now know what happens in the future. What chaos _you _create. I must destroy that evil before it becomes full!" A blade came out of the man's right arm plate and he lunged at me. I thought I was going to die, but the Master Chief came and tackled the other "Spartan", making him miss. "Stay out of this, you fool! This is for the good of the future!" He lunged again, but this time I had time to react. I put my hands out in front of me and shouted, "Go away!" Two sickle-like blades came out of my forearms, and the gold-armored man stopped in his tracks and then flew into a wall.

He got up out of the dent I had created and growled, "Damn you...demon!" He was about to lunge again when another Marine came in

and reported, "Sir! Enemy sighted. But...it's strange. There are only four of them. A Hunter, an Elite, a Jackal, and a Grunt. They don't seem to be attacking, Sir. Silva's not here, so I'm asking you. Should we fire?" The Chief was about to reply when I asked, "Wait! What color armor are each of them wearing?" The Marine looked puzzled but then said, "The Elite and the Hunter are wearing black. The Grunt is wearing blue and doesn't seem to have a methane mask on him. All the Jackal is wearing is pants. Very strange... Why do you ask?"

I stood up and mumbled to myself, "Could it _really_ be them?" Turning around, I ran out the door and looked down the hill, forgetting the armored man for the moment. It was true, there _were_ _Covenant_ like the Marine described. When one of them saw me and called out my name, I made it official. I waved and said, "Hey, guys! How did you get here?"

A Marine came up to me and said, "Wait a second! You _know_ _theses_ Covenant!" I turned to face him and said, "Yup. They've actually been living with me for about three years. Don't be alarmed. When I found them, they were almost dead and they had absolutely no memory. Kinda like when you found _me_. You'd probably wonder how four Covenant could be on Earth, undetected by the authorities for three years. That's because I created a disguise mechanism that gave them each a human form."

The Marine looked extremely confused, so I just grinned and left it at that. I looked down and saw that they were half way up when I felt a sharp pain in my back. I winced and turned around, seeing that the armored man had stabbed me with his arm-blade. I brought my arm up and tried to return the attack, but the man quickly took his blade and slashed a long cut across my chest. I fell to the ground and put my hands over the wound, trying to slow the blood. The man was about to cut me again when a blob of yellow-green plasma crashed into the wall right next to the man's head. I heard someone say, "You need to work on your aiming! _Hit_ _him_ this time!"

The armored man cursed and said, "Looks like your _friends_ _have_ come to help you." I looked up and he glared at me. "Do not think that this is the last time you'll see me. I'll be back to finish the job." With that, the man disappeared. The Master Chief ran over to me and said, "Zak, are you alright?" I just looked up at him, unable to think of words. The four Covenant reached the top of the hill and the Marines moved out of their way. The Elite came up to me and I managed to say, "H-Hey, Franky..." He crouched down and said, "Zak! C'mon! Stay focused!" He turned around and said, "Will someone _help_ him_!" The Marines hesitated, but one finally said, "Let's get him to the med. room!" The last thing I remember is someone picking me up and carrying me somewhere...

POV Change - Master Chief

The kid was taken to the med room and had been out cold for several hours. He had lost a lot of blood what that other so-called "Spartan" came and tried to kill him. The four Covenant who had come to Zak's aid had explained how they had been living in Zak's home for over four years. They had been using some sort of camouflage that gave them human appearances so they could go out on public. The Master Chief was told that they had no memory of the Covenant Homeworld or ever being in their forces. All they could remember was the time they spent on Earth since they crashed somewhere in the desert. They said

Zak had destroyed the ship just in case there were any tacking devices.

The Elite called "Franky" had been pacing for an hour now while the other three sat against a wall. John walked into the room that lead into the med space and looked through the window. The bandages around Zak's chest were drenched in blood and the medic went to try and wake him so they could be changes, but he wouldn't open his eyes. The Chief noticed that there were tears streaming down the kid's face. He was told that about an hour ago, Zak had opened his eyes, sat up with a start, started gibbering in a strange language, and nearly slashed the medic's throat open with the blades on his arms before becoming unconscious once more. The Master Chief had arrived just before Zak became unconscious and saw that his eyes did not seem to be his own. They were a dark-dull green that seemed to hold no life. The Chief looked back at where the kid was resting and noticed that he was mouthing something. Whatever he had seen when his attacker "showed him the future" must have been terrible.

John sighed and finally spoke, "Cortana, how is he? Will he be alright?"

"Well..." the AI replied hesitantly as her holographic, female form appeared on a near-by table, "He'll be fine. No vital organs were punctured... But it's very strange. I checked his blood, scanned his body, and found something. His blood is most definitely not normal. Not even a mixture of several human blood types could match his. The way his body is structured also puzzles me. There are wires running through his entire nervous system, connecting to the ports on his neck, legs, and arms. His body seems human, but slightly altered. Not counting his blades, tail, and those wires."

"Meaning?" The Chief asked with a ring of impatience in his voice.

"Meaning, he's not human. There isn't one bit of human DNA in him."

"Kinda figured that. But what I _want _to know, it what _is _he?"

Cortana crossed her arms over her chest and shook her head. The Master Chief was about to ask another question when a Marine came rushing in. He saluted, "Sir, Covenant! A _lot _of Covenant. And they're attacking. Awaiting orders, Sir."

"What else?" John answered. "Return fire."

2. Prophecy

CHAPTER 2 - PROPHECY

I was hearing the voices the voices again. The whispers of a distant past. But they fading in and out, as if broken. I strained to hear them, but they would not fully come through. "The Prophets chose a young boy... power of the Darkness...his destiny will..." That's all I could get, over and over. There were images too. An unknown solar system, a vast city made of an unknown alloy... It made no sense. A second voice came then, not at all like the first. I felt someone's

hand on my arm...

I bolted awake with a gasp for air. I looked around to see who had woken me and I found myself staring into someone's green eyes. I blinked. It was Franky...in his human form. I was about to ask him something when he spoke up, "We're under attack. They've taken hold of most of the fort. We need to leave..._now_." I was still in a daze when he tossed me a clean shirt and lead me through the halls. I didn't pay any attention to my surroundings...just followed. Everything around me was oblivious until I felt the drop-ship take off. I was seated inside the "Pelican" with eleven other people including Franky, Stan, the Master Chief, and Sergeant Johnson. Some of the Marines kept looking at me and I heard them whispering amongst themselves. Franky gave me worried looks and asked if I was alright from time to time, but mainly kept to himself when I didn't answer. I just stared vacantly out the window as the drop-ship got higher and higher and the Covenant troops below seemed to become tiny ants. Nothing mattered at that moment. Nothing at all. Just meaningless forms of existence. Everything...meaningless...

POV Change - Franky

Zak's condition worried me greatly. He hadn't said anything ever since he blacked out and he didn't look away from the drop-ship's window. My name is Franky; or it is now because I can't remember my real one. I am an "Elite" and apparently I used to be part of the Covenant force, though I don't ever remember being so. The three other Covenant and I had crash-landed on Earth four years ago somewhere in an American desert. Zak had been visiting a friend when he found us. Stan, the "Grunt", had never really gotten used to being around humans. He was on the same drop-ship as me and even though he, like I, was in his human form, he was still quite jumpy. His human form looked like it belonged to a young boy with brown hair and hazel eyes. Steve, the "Jackal", and Roy, the "Hunter", were in the Pelican following behind us. Steve was intrigued by the human nature and spent most of the four years on Earth studying. While in his human form, he looked like a short, middle-aged man with dirty blonde hair and brown eyes. Strangely, Roy took a liking to watching horror movies and eating ketchup-covered potato chips. In his human form, he looked like an over-sized, extremely muscular twenty-year-old with buzzed blond hair and dark eyes. Me, on the other hand, looked seventeen. I looked fairly fit (not fat nor highly muscular), had short, blue hair and yellow-green eyes.

I looked back to where Zak sat across from me. He still hadn't moved. He just kept staring blankly out the window. I wanted to know what he saw; what was troubling him so much. But it would have to wait. It could wait until things settled down. Until he was ready to talk.

POV Change - Covenant: Zuka Zamamee

Zuka Zamamee tensed as he increased the speed of his Banshee. He was told that the human in the special armor was inside the enemy aircraft that he was tracing. What he _really_ wanted to do was to get that man and kill him... But his orders were clear. He was to find a certain boy and bring him back to the ship. He was not to afflict any harm to the boy, but bring him back at any cost. Zamamee did not know why this human _brat_ was so important to the Prophets, but he would follow his orders, despite his suspicion. The human

craft came into view, and he slowed. He would keep tracking them until they landed. Then he would attack.

POV Change - Master Chief

The Chief was fed up. Zak needed snap out of his little state of shock - right now. The Pelican had been in the air for over an hour and Zak still hadn't moved. John unbuckled his seat belt and struck Zak across the face. That got his attention. The kid looked up at the Master Chief with an angry glare as Cortana shouted, "Chief! That was un-called for!"

The Chief opened up a private COM channel and stated, "Well, it got his attention, didn't it?" The AI didn't reply. He spoke again so everyone could hear. "You need to wake up, Zak. Those Covenant seemed to be after you. Our translators indicated that some of them were saying Where's the boy? Our orders are to take him in, unharmed.' What I want to know is how are you of any importance to them?" John paused to take in a deep breath. "Who are you? Really. What is it that you saw?"

Zak looked out the window once more and said, "I already told you who I am." The Master Chief sighed and shook his head. John sat back down as he said, "You told me your name and where you live. One thing is, you're obviously not human." A few of the Marines shifted uneasily at that last remark. Zak looked to Stan and then to Franky, and then the human-disguised Elite sighed. "Zak's a hybrid mix of a few races that were supposedly wiped out many decades ago. He's not sure how many different races are in his ancestry...but he's one of the only survivors."

Sergeant Johnson spoke up next. "That's all fine and dandy, but there's one thing I don't get. What is it about you that the Covenant want so bad?" Zak obviously felt the eleven pairs of eyes questioning him, because he looked down at his feet. He sighed and muttered, "I don't...really know what I saw..." The kid pause for three seconds and took in a shaky breath and started again. "And I don't exactly know what the Covenant want with me..."

The Master Chief sat back down and tilted his head to one side. "Exactly?" Zak told them all about what he remembered of the horrible images he had seen when the other "Spartan" had attacked; what he had been dreaming about when he was unconscious. John turned to look at Franky and noticed that he looked even more worried than before.

Sergeant Johnson cleared his throat and spoke up after about a minute of silence. "That's one hell of a nightmare, kid. Just one question; what are...Prophets?" The Sergeant sighed and shook his head when Zak looked out the window again without replying.

"Prophets are supposedly Covenant leaders." Cortana said, joining the conversation and answering for Zak. "They think of them as "holy beings". The message that kept repeating in your dream, Zak, was part of a Covenant prophecy. I heard it once while tapping into their systems."

"So, what?" Johnson asked, raising an eyebrow. "The Covenant think the kid's some kind of...holy figure?"

Cortana sighed and continued. "Well, if Zak is the young boy mentioned in the prophecy, then yes." John noticed that as Cortana kept talking, Zak's mood seemed to darken. "According to the prophecy," she continued, "an ancient knowledge and power is held in the boy's soul. The ancient power of the Darkness sleeps within the boy until it strong enough to merge once more. The boy with the power of Darkness will undergo changes throughout his life and his destiny depends on his actions throughout life... I never quite believed in religious prophecies of myths, but considering the fact that Zak fits the description in the Covenant database, I'm beginning to wonder..." The AI paused for a full three seconds before continuing with a trace of concern in her voice. "Zak, would you like to hear the whole prophecy?"

"No," he replied with a ring of irritation, anger, and annoyance, "I don't. I just want everyone to shut up and leave me alone." He started scraping his two arm-blades against each other, trying to ignore the looks everyone was giving him. "It's none of your business, anyway."

"Actually, Zak," The Master Chief argued with anger also rising in his voice, "it is our business. If it's about the Covenant, we need to know all the details. Tell us what you know."

"It'll have to wait, Chief." Foehammer's voice buzzed in over the drop-ship's speakers. "We got company. There's a Banshee tailing us and a dozen Covenant drop-ships behind it. I'm gonna land in a forest clearing and you guys'll have to take em out."

"Roger that, Foehammer." Then the Chief turned back to face Zak. "See what I mean?" Zak lowered his gaze and started scraping his blades together again. The Chief could feel it; they had a fight on their hands. A really big fight. He felt the Pelican loose alti twenty-four passengers were out of the two drop-ships, they lifted off, saying to call fro pick-up. Since the Pelicans had lost their weaponry when landing on Halo, they'd be sitting ducks if they stayed.

Zak, Franky, and Stan walked over to where Steve and Roy (the other two "good Covenant") were and started talking. Zak kept to himself, though, staring at his feet. John was about to go over and ask Zak about his dream again when a Marine shouted, "Yo, Chief! We got a bunch of floating energy swords comin' our way! You know what that means." Elites with camouflage; great. The Master Chief ran over to where the Marine was standing and looked down hill. Sure enough, he saw two energy swords poking out from their wielders' hiding spots. There were also a truckload of Grunts and Jackals rushing up the hill. He could also hear the clank and jangle of Hunter armor in the distance. John turned around as Sergeant Johnson shouted to the Marines, "We got company, people! A bunch of Covies comin' up the hill. We're dealin' with Hunters; anyone got a Jackhammer? Good. And watch out for Elites with camo. Alright, you Greenhorns, get ready."

The attack came fast. It started with just the Grunts and Jackals, but then the Elites moved in, with the Hunters hiding among the rocks and trees, waiting for a clear shot. The Master Chief turned and saw the human-disguised Covenant standing around Zak, Guarding him as two Marines fell to the ground with crystalline needles exploding in their stomachs, Zak stared down at them, wide-eyed, as blood

splattered everywhere. The Chief couldn't hear what the kid was muttering at first, but then his voice grew louder. "Why..? Why are you doing this? Why are you fighting? Stop it... The killing... Stop it!" Then he did something that none of us really expected. Something that made both the Covenant and Marines stop their fighting and stare. Zak had started talking in the Covenant language!

POV Change - Zak

After I stopped blabbing in the strange language that I barely understood, I just stared off into space. _What the hell _was_ that?_ I felt myself plop down on the ground as I tried to recollect myself. None of this was making sense. Was I really the "chosen one" in the prophecy?

The first voice I heard was human...and angry. "_Him. _I knew it was him! He's one of _them_! Don't you see! He's been fooling us all along!" I looked up and recognized the face from one of the men aboard the drop-ship. He was Corporal E. Degnan - Schmidt, a very skilled man whose specialties were snipers and flame-throwers. He took his rifle and pointed it at me. "This all ends when you do, ya treacherous bastard." He pulled the trigger and I shut my eyes, waiting for the end; but it didn't come. I opened my eyes again at the sound of a short squeal and a solid _thump. _A Grunt lay dead right in front of me. A few of the Marines and Covenant soldiers were getting edgy, but no one moved except for the Corporal. As he advanced towards me, I reached around me, looking for a gun; a rock..._anything_. My hand landed on my tail and I felt soft fur. I was a wolf again. I found nothing to protect myself, so I did the only other thing I could think of. I jumped up, glared at the man, and ran.

I heard Franky calling after me and then the fighting started again. A few Marines tried to get in my way, but they couldn't stop me. I noticed a Grunt running away screaming, "That's him! He's the one!" I ran after it, jumped on it, and brought it down, face-first, with my feet. Grabbing its plasma rifle, I started running again, now faster than before. And Elite leaped out of its hiding place, blocking my way, and I skidded to a halt with a deep growl forging in my throat.

POV Change - Covenant: Zuka Zamamee

Zamamee stood before a pale boy with light hair, deep green eyes, and curved blades coming out of his arms. The boy let out a sound not humanly possible, and the Elite warrior took a step back. This boy was not human; he was _the one._ He was the one the Prophets wanted so badly. But why? Aside from his inhuman appearance and nature, he didn't seem any different than the other vermin up the hill. The boy aimed the rifle at Zamamee's head, but he did not falter. Zuka was quite sure the boy could not understand, but he spoke in his native language, saying, "You are to come with us, boy. I am ordered not to hurt you, so I advise you come willingly." The pale boy glared, and to Zamamee's surprise, spoke in the same tongue. "I won't." He aimed down and shot the black-armored Elite in the foot. Zuka leaped back, enraged, as a burning sensation crawled up his left leg.

The boy began to run past Zamamee, but he grabbed the boy by the arm. Angered, the pale boy spun around and glared at the Elite warrior. Zuka let go and grunted in pain, for it felt like he had just reached

into fire. He was about to try something else when his Grunt assistant, Yayap, came out from his hiding spot behind a rock, reporting, "Excellency, we have been ordered to retreat." Retreat! What kind of idiocy was this? Zamamee turned back to face the boy and saw a grin of victory on his face. The black-armored Elite narrowed his eyes and ran in the direction of the drop-ship. He'd be back, he swore on that.

POV Change - Zak

Once the Elite and Grunt were out of sight, I fell to my knees and dug my fingers into the soft soil. My head hurt like hell and nothing was making any sense. Some part, deep within me, wanted to cry; but the other part wouldn't let me. I didn't look up until I heard light footsteps coming down the hill. When I looked up, I saw Franky walking towards me with concern written all over his face. Franky held out his hand and said, "We should go back with the others. The Chief told me to get you."

I took his hand and he helped me up. "What about the Marines and the Crazy Corporal?" I mentally laughed at my sudden nickname for him, as Franky laughed aloud. He stood up straighter and replied, "They've got the Marines calmed down, and the Chief told the Corporal that if he tried anything, he'd be restrained."

"Guess it's a good thing that most of them don't know you guys are really Covenant in disguise," I said with a grin.

He returned my smile and replied, "I don't plan to tell them."

It was getting dark and the Marines had lit a fire. They were roasting who-knows-how-long' old hot-dogs and were chatting about random things in their lives. John (as I found out was the Master Chief's real name by Cortana) had called the drop-ship pilots and told them that the coast was clear and that they could land. The Corporal sat on a near-by log with his legs crossed, always glaring at me. It was a bit unnerving at first, but I learned to ignore him. I was talking with the Sergeant when he kinda snapped again. "How can you people be so calm! Didn't you see what he could do? Didn't you hear him speak in _their_ _language! He's _one_ _of_ them, I tell you!"

The Sergeant grunted and said, "Be quiet and sit down, you dolt. Yeah, he's done some pretty freaky stuff, has a tail and weird arm-blade thingies, and has spoken the Covenant language, but who cares? He hasn't done anything to hurt you, has he? Has he done anything to hurt _any_ of us?" When no one answered, he continued. "No, I didn't think so. So until we figure out more about this mess, he's our friend, got it?"

I let go of a breath that I was unconsciously holding and turned back to face the Sergeant. "Thanks. I'm gonna have to watch out for that guy. I know what I can do is really strange, and when I started talking the Covenant language, I scared myself too... I may not be human, but I don't wanna hurt you guys."

Johnson shook his head and sighed, "I know, kid. I really do. I just don't know about everybody else around here. Especially that Corporal. You gotta sleep with one eye open. I just hope things get better around here. War is hard, and things like this make it

harder." We chatted about things like that for a long time. After a while, we just sat, gazing at the strange starscape out in front of us as the Marines started to fall asleep. The silence lasted about ten minutes when the Sergeant spoke up. "Hey, kid. You believe in heaven?"

I continued to gaze out at the stars and moons as I answered, "To tell you the truth, no." I took a thirteen-second pause and then added, "I believe in Paradise."

Sergeant Johnson snorted and I laughed. "Paradise, huh? Well wherever good people go when they die, I hope the Marines and soldiers that have died in the past years of this stupid battle are now somewhere without war." I nodded my head in agreement and took in a deep breath. When I looked at the Sergeant again, his eyes were closed and his chest went steadily up and down. As I listened to the sounds of the night, I repeated the conversation in my head.

"Do you believe in heaven?"

"No, I believe in Paradise."

3. Traitors Among the Truth and Reconciliat...

CHAPTER 3 - TRAITORS AMONG TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

My name is Corporal Erik A. Degnan - Schmidt, and I was aboard the Pillar of Autumn when it was attacked by the Covenant. Now I'm on this stupid ring-shaped planet with a bunch of the other survivors. Not just the Marines, but that Spartan freak and this bastard kid. Oh, but this kid ain't no human; I can sure as hell tell you that. He's done all this crazy stuff and even started talking in the enemy's language! You'd think that would be a sign that he couldn't be trusted; but no! The Chief, Sergeant Johnson, and a bunch of the dumb-ass Marines are stickin' up for him. Well, I'll tell you this, it'll end soon enough - I'll make sure of that.

I sit up, awake and keeping guard. My turn to keep watch had just started, but I'd been up all night. See I don't trust that stupid kid. I've been keeping my eye on him ever since we found him on this crazy ring world. That's right, we found him. He claims to have no idea how he ended up on "Halo" and supposedly lost his memory. Yeah right. I didn't understand how everyone else could be so calm around this brat.

The kid was asleep now and was mumbling under his breath. Out of curiosity and suspicion, I was about to get closer and try to hear, but I spun around when I heard a noise from behind, in the forest. I switched on my flashlight and searched around for the source, but after not finding anything, sat back down. It was a few minutes till I noticed there wasn't any more noise coming from the brat anymore, and I looked up. He was gone. I cursed under my breath and got up again. My eyes darted from tree-to-tree, rock-to-rock. This was not good. I heard a rustle in the forest again and rushed in at full alert. The glow from my flashlight only covered part of my view, and I felt extremely vulnerable. My light searched high and low, not finding anything until I saw a Marine. A dead Marine. I knelt down beside the fallen soldier to examine the cause of death and found that he was still warm, meaning he didn't die too long ago. There was

severe bleeding around the neck where I guessed would be a large cut or bullet wound... But there was no slit, no bullet hole...there were bite marks.

This was insane. I staggered back, feeling dizzy and nauseated. The first thought that came to my mind was the kid. He did this. But how? Why? I laugh at myself when I think the word vampire. It was ridiculous. Vampires are mythical creatures. Unholy creatures that lurked in the shadows, drank human blood, and burned in the sunlight. There was another laugh, and at first I thought it was my own, but as cold realization occurs to me, I slowly turn around.

"Vampire, huh?" it laughed as it watched me from the shadows. "Heh... Close enough." Then he stepped out into the dim light that one of the near-by moons gave off and grinned mockingly. My eyes widened as I saw that I was correct; it was the boy. Except he looked different... More mature, more sure of himself, and his eyes... His eyes looked like black holes into nothingness.

I was able to mutter out a shaken, "W-what are you? Who are you? You're different then before."

He let out a short, cold laugh, and said darkly, "You're right. I am different. I'm not the same person I was about a half-hour ago. But who I am and what I am is none of your business. And don't try anything, because, sadly to your disadvantage, you can't stop me." I didn't care what he said; I would kill him. I pulled out my silent rifle and fired three times into his chest. But, to my horror, that didn't hurt him. He just growled and glared at me with his cold, dark eyes. I turned and started to run, but before I could, I felt him hit me in the back of my head with a force that wasn't humanly possible. The last thing I heard before blacking out was him muttering, "Stupid human..."

I woke to the sound of laughter and the smell of bacon. Blinking, I stared up at the tree branches, wondering where I was. Then I sat up with a start, remembering last night's encounter with that foul demon. My hand found its way up to my neck, and to my relief, there were no bite marks. There was just a throbbing pain in the back of my head. I got up and ran back to the camp site just as I heard Sergeant Johnson say, "Now where the hell is D - Schmidty?"

I ran out of the forest and stopped, breathing heavily. There must have been a crazed look in my eyes because some of the Marines started at me with awkward expressions. My eyes darted around, looking for whom I wanted; and then I found him. He was still asleep. I stormed over to where he lay and pointed my gun at his head, shouting, "Wake up, you bastard!" He half-opened one eye and sleepily mumbled something that I couldn't hear. His eyes had changed back to their normal, emerald green, but that didn't matter; he was still a monster. There were a few groans and sighs from the Marines with some saying, "Not again. Give it a rest, Schmidty. The kid didn't do anything wrong. You're crazy."

"You think I'm crazy!" I shrieked. "The way I see it; you're the ones who are crazy! How could you trust this little brat? He's not human; he even spoke in the enemy's language!"

Zak sat up, still half asleep, and said, "I don't even have any idea what I said..." He yawned. "Maybe I was just picking up on some

Elite's radio or something... I wouldn't do anything to hurt you guys."

"Damn you! Liar!" I cried out. "I know what you did last night!" As I said this, the Master Chief came running towards me, shouting, "What's going on? What's this all about?" My hand was shaking now, still aimed at the boy. I swallowed hard and finally said, "H-he fed...on a Marine's blood." There were a few laughs, gasps, and numerous murmurs.

The kid stood up, took in a deep breath, and sighed, saying, "Dude... The only thing I've eaten in the past days is what you guys have given me. Besides, why would I drink a guy's blood? And how would I? My blade thingies went back into my arms last night." He held up his arm to show me and everyone else. A Marine stood up and tried to help him by saying, "C'mon, Schmidty. The kid doesn't have a blade. How else would he draw blood; and enough to kill? By biting him?" I just nodded, and the Marine hesitantly told Zak to open his mouth. The kid raised an eyebrow, but then opened his mouth, and sure enough, his K9s were longer and sharper than any human's. The Marine who had stood up for him muttered a "holy shit" and stepped away.

The Master Chief stepped up and crossed his arms as Zak closed his mouth and sighed. The Chief tilted his head to one side and said, "We all know that Zak isn't human. But that doesn't mean that he's been killing Marines and drinking their blood. Show us where this body is." I reluctantly turned away from Zak and walked into the forest and where I was the night before.

Sergeant Johnson knelt down beside the fallen comrade and muttered, "Damn. This must've been one crazy wolf or somethin'. The only thing is, there ain't a scratch on him, sides his neck. But I really don't think Zak would do anything like this."

I looked over to where the kid was standing with his four, strange friends, and he looked up at me. "Well, Zak... If you didn't do it, then explain what you were doing in the forest last night."

"Um..." His eyebrows creased in frustration as he tried to think, and I was sure I got him this time. But then he spoke up, saying, "Oh yeah. I got up to get a drink," He pointed deeper into the forest, "from the river that's down a ways more. All I did was that...and go the bathroom. But I didn't do anything wrong, unless peeing is a crime now."

The Marines laughed and even the Chief gave out a short chuckle. I just clenched my fists in anger and gritted my teeth. "I'll prove it. Pull up your shirt so they can see where I shot you, ya little brat." He stared at me blankly for a few seconds, but then pulled up his shirt, showing his stomach. There were the long, stitched cuts from when the strange, armored man had attacked, and three bullet wounds. "See!" I shouted. But then I noticed that the wounds were completely healed.

The Chief grunted and said, "Those bullet wounds were there before today, Corporal. I saw them when he was getting examined by the medics. It was dark last night and you hadn't gotten any sleep. You must have been hallucinating. It was probably an Elite that got left behind."

I fell to my knees and stuttered, "I-impossible..." That was that. One Marine started digging a grave for the dead man as everyone else went back up to camp. It seemed, then, that my feud with the boy was over...for the time being...

POV Change - Zak

Jeezâ€¦ What a day; and it had only been four hours since I woke up. I was really confused about what the corporal had accused me of. I _did_ have a weird, bittersweet taste in my mouth, and I hadn't seen any animals besides birds since I first woke up without my memory. But I didn't remember anything from last night except getting a drink and taking a dump. The corporal had gone on about how I spoke in the Covenant language the day before, but, honestly, I have no idea what I said. He had now wandered off somewhere, saying that he was going scouting, and I sighed as I watched a Marine put a grave-marker that he'd made from wood next to where he buried the dead man. Looking down at the long scars left on my arms by the blades, I wondered why they went back in. Things in my body were changing, and I seemed to have no control over it.

The Master Chief and about half of the Marines had gone on a mission to locate something called the _Silent Cartographer_ about three hours ago, and when I asked if I could go, he declined very sternly. He didn't want to "risk any chance of the Covenant getting their hands on me". I was angry with him for a while, but I got over it. The Chief had returned and put Cortana into a holo-pad they had salvaged from a crash site, so now she overlooked the camp. It was dark now and she called me over, so I slowly walked towards her hologram. The AI sighed and questioned, "You're _sure_ you don't remember seeing or hearing anything strange last night?" I just shook my head and sighed. "What happened yesterday kind of shook up the Marines. Do you even know what you said?" This time, she sighed when I shook my head again. "I analyzed it, and it seems that you said, Stop it! I command you! Do not hurt them or you shall be punished. You have all been warned of my power and I will have no mercy on you if you disobey.'" She paused as I stared at her, wide-eyed. I muttered a quiet holy crap' under my breath and she said, "This is evidence that you _are_ the one mentioned in the prophecy. Whatever happens, we can't let the Covenant get you. Who knows what they'll do?"

And just as if her last comment triggered it, something down in the forest exploded and there were a lot of angry and surprised shouts. Someone shouted that they were under attack and five more explosions occurred. A sharp pain spiked in both of my arms and I felt the skin open up. The two blades reappeared and the cuts left behind healed instantly. I felt several sharp spikes in my back, but aside from that, nothing happened. _Oh great... Not again... _I was changing again. It didn't hurt when my tail changed its shape (most of the time I wouldn't even know it had unless someone told me) but when other parts in my changed it would hurt...just a bit. When I looked up again, the same Elite from the day before stood in front of me. Again, without thinking, I grinned mockingly and said, "Come to play again, have you Zuka?" I wasn't even sure what language I had spoken in, but the black-clad warrior took a step back.

I heard Cortana shout, "Chief! Get me out of here!" as the Elite reached behind him and then held up a Marine by the collar of his

shirt. I was about to turn away when something froze me in my place. Zamamee had slit the man's throat and blood dripped down his neck onto the ground. I could smell the blood, almost taste it; I could here the Marine's heartbeat as it got slower. A human laugh came from behind me and I whipped around to see the Crazy Corporal. He smirked and exclaimed, "I knew it was you! You were the one I encountered last night. You crave blood; I know that. So I told them. I figured that if they wanted you, they could have you. You're too much hassle." But as he said that, a gold-armored Elite walked up behind him and muttered, "You have served your purpose and now your time has ended." An energy sword appeared in its hand and he cut Corporal Erik Degnan - Schmidt in two.

The golden Elite stepped over the top half of the corpse and said, "I am Field Master Tuno Tonkomee. I was told that our last mission to bring you to the Truth and Reconciliation was a failure, so I decided to come along this time. The stupid human that I cut in half told us about your strange craving for...human blood and we decided to use it against you. But I advise you come willingly so we do not have to harm you." I stepped back, narrowed my eyes, and got into a fighting stance as the Elite said, "You wish to fight? So be it."

I was about to charge when I heard two gun shots and saw the Fields Master fall to the ground. Blinking twice, I saw the Master Chief standing about thirty feet away with a sniper rifle now pointed at Zuka. He fired, but just as a Grunt jumped on his back, shifting his aim. The bullet scratched the Elite's shoulder plate and its shield flared. The Chief flung the Grunt off of his back and ran towards me. He grabbed my arm and said, "We gotta get out of here." I pulled my arm out of his grasp and hesitated before following the Chief and looked back at the two corpses. One was human, one was Covenant; but it didn't matter. I sighed and murmured, "May your souls find their way to Paradise," and then ran after the Chief.

I didn't understandâ€¦ Everything just kept getting more and more confusing. Did I really have a craving for blood? And why? My memory was still incomplete and that made everything a whole lot harder to figure out. We had been aboard the Pelican flown by Foehammer for about an hour when Cortana had announced that Captain Keyes (whom I had not met) had been taken prisoner by the Covenant.

"It's very strange," she went on. "The Covenant doesn't take prisoners. They just kill every human they find. It was also strange that they retreated that one time after attacking the baseâ€¦" She sighed and got back to the point. "The only reason I can think of that would make them keep the captain aliveâ€¦ is to find the location of Earth. He's being held aboard the Truth and Reconciliation. Our mission is to get in, get out, and keep the captain alive."

The Master Chief nodded to Cortana and then turned to the Marines. "You got that? We need to make this trip as quick as possible; and that means no stalling for anything except to defend yourselves against attacking Covenant." He then turned to me and said, "Zak, I want you and your friends to stay here."

I narrowed my eyes and said, "No. I don't care what you say. You wouldn't let me come last time and I'm not gonna wait again. I'm not a Marine, so you can't order me around. I'm going."

"Zak, you can't!" Cortana argued, cutting in. "We already talked

about this. I thought you agreed that we couldn't take any chances of them getting a hold on you. We don't know what they would do to you if they did. Going there would be like handing yourself over on a silver platter."

I smiled at her last remark and assured, "I'll be fine. Don't worry. I can take care of myself; they won't get me. My arm-blades came back, and I took these from Tonkomee, the gold Elite the Chief killed." I held up a plasma rifle and I extended an energy blade from my hand, making sure not to hit anyone. I discharged it and opened my hand, showing the device that the energy filtered through. A Marine I had come to know as Sally stared at me wide-eyed and said, "Whoa, dude... You can wield that thing?"

"B-but Zak," Stan cut in, "it's not safe. Even if you have weapons to defend yourself, there's still a r-risk of them getting you." Franky, Steve, and Roy nodded in agreement; Franky having a deep frown of concern on his false face. I sighed and shook my head, saying, "I still need to find the rest of my memory, and the Covenant seem to have a lead to it..."

"Sorry to interrupt your little conversation," Foehammer's voice came in over the speakers, "but we got touch down in five." There were numerous murmurs and the Marines started to check their rifles. "Copy that, Foehammer." Cortana said as the Master Chief took her out of the holo-pad and inserted her into the back of his helmet. "The Covenant ship is holding position approximately 300 meters above the other end of this plateau."

"So how do we get inside the ship if it's in the air?" A Marine retorted as he loaded his gun. "The Force gave me a rifle, not wings." Sergeant Johnson snorted and said, "There's a gravity lift the Covenant use to move supplies between the ship and the surface. _That's _our ticket in."

"Once we get inside the ship," Cortana continued, "we should be able to lock on to Captain Keyes' neural implants." John readied his sniper rifle and held my plasma rifle tightly, having put the sword filter into one of my pockets. The Sergeant stood up and shouted, "Hit it, Marines! Go! Go! Go!" and we all filed out of the drop-ship. Cortana spoke up again and said to the Chief, "Stick to the higher ground level. You should be able to reek on the Covenant position without being spotted. I've detected Covenant stationary guns near the next pass. I recommend taking out the gunners while I call for Marine support." Then I heard her speaking to the Sergeant. "Get ready to move in and support us, Sergeant. The Master Chief is going to covertly take out as many Covenant as he can. Don't open fire until you hear the enemy return fire on _us_. That should let us keep the element of surprise."

I stood, watching the Master Chief, as the Pelican took off. Franky came up behind me and put a hand on my shoulder, saying, "Hey, Zak. Are you ok?" I sighed and nodded, loosening my grip on the plasma rifle. Johnson walked up to me and said, "Hey uh... I know your friends here wanna stick by your side," he looked at Franky and motioned to the other three, "but they got no training or nothin. I mean that Stan kid looks like he's just seven years old."

Looking over at the other three, I laughed. Steve was loading an assault rifle as Stan was climbing on Roy's back. I turned back

around and noticed Franky was smiling also. "It may not look like it, Sergeant, but they've had training. Lots of it. Don't let their appearance fool you." Johnson looked over at my three friends, at Franky, and then gave me an uncertain look. He shrugged and sighed, "Alright, if you say so."

Franky was about to ask something when there were gunshots and a Marine shouted, "Enemy fire!" We all rushed in, guns ready. Covenant were streaming out from the pass and the men showed them no mercy. I ran with them and heard some saying things like, "Let em have it!" "Nice shot!" and "Get up so I can kill you again!" I didn't pay attention to that. Something inside me had switched on, and I didn't pay attention to anything but my prey. Most of them ran away or just stared, not knowing what to do. I felt a slight burning on my back, and I turned around. There was a Grunt standing there, trembling. "You think you can hurt me?" I spread my arm apart and narrowed my eyes. "Try me." The Grunt screamed and ran away, and I sighed, shot it three times, and watched it fall.

"Zak!" I looked up and saw Franky and the others running towards me. Stan was still on Roy's back and was staring at all the dead bodies, wide eyed. It looked like he was out of breath even though Roy was the one doing all the running. Steve shook his head and said, "This is quite messy, isn't it." I motioned them forward and ran towards the Master Chief as the shooting stopped and a Marine yelled, "Hey, you did it! We're right behind ya, Chief."

John ran ahead and we followed until Cortana said, "Stop," and we did. "The motion tracker shows movement around the next bend." One of the Corporals nodded and replied, "We'll be ready to assist as soon as you call for us, Cortana." Everything else went on from there. Once all of the enemy Covenant were dead, we moved on. Roy, Stan, and Steve helped some, but mainly just followed me. Franky shot one whenever they would get close and the Grunts would run away if he glared at them. They must have seen something in his eyes.

Cortana's voice came in as she said, "All right. We are now directly under the ship now." A Marine snorted and said, if we're gonna board that thing, we need a plan." The others agreed and Cortana said, "We need to ambush them at the gravity lift's loading zone and use the list to enter the ship." The fighting started again and after it seemed to calm down, Cortana's voice came in again. "Alert! Covenant drop-ships are inbound." Aside from the new threat of the drop-ship, more Covenant came down from the gravity lift; but it didn't last long. The Marines had commandeered the stationary guns surrounding the area and the sky was full with plasma fire.

I was staring up at the ship called the _Truth and Reconciliation _until I heard to sniper shots and Chief telling the remaining Marines to get onto the gravity lift. There were two Hunters lying dead on the ground and I saw Roy shudder. A Marine spoke into his COM and reported, "We've secured the area. Let's square away the grav lift. Marines, prepare for boarding action."

"_Cortana to Echo 419. We've reached the gravity lift and are ready for reinforcements."_

"_Copy that, Cortana." _Foehammer said over the COM. _"Hold tight, gentlemen. Foehammer out." _

Cortana sighed and then said, "Once we're inside, I can home in on the Captain's command neural interface. He'll probably be in or near the ship's brig. That should narrow our search."

"_Echo 419 inbound. Ready to drop load." _Marines streamed out of the drop-ship and ran onto the gravity lift. One shouted, "The Calvary has arrived!" I stepped onto the platform and felt the air change. Franky stepped on beside me and flinched; he felt it too. So did the Marines, because I noticed them make comments about it. The Master Chief flipped a switch and gravity seemed to cease all itself. A Marine shouted, "Yeehaw!" and others cheered along with him. As I gripped my rifle tightly and watched the ground get farther away, my only thought was, _into the belly of the beast..._

POV Change - Master Chief

John had been watching Zak while he fought, and it was a bit unnerving. When we was fighting, it seemed like Zak had no thought except taking his enemy down... Now that everyone was solidly standing on something, John looked over at Zak and saw that he was laughing at something Sergeant Johnson had said. _At leased he doesn't have that hating look in his eyes anymore... _When the Master Chief had looked at Zak earlier, he had this look in his eyes. It was like looking into a dark emptiness. But now, it seemed he was back to his semi cheerful self.

"We're in." Cortana reported as the Chief felt his feet touch ground again. "I've got a good lock on the Captain's CNI transponder. But...there are no Covenant defenses detected..."

"What?" A Marine with a New Yorker accent questioned. "There's no Covenant here? Maybe Nobody's home." Just as he said that, an Elite roared from behind them and plasma fire filled the room. A different Marine got hit and yelped, "Contact! Lots of contact!" Another angrily said, "_'No Covenant'._ You _had_ to open your mouth!"

The Chief was paying attention to a group of Jackals that he didn't even notice the golden Elite coming up behind him. Not until he heard the clash of energy blades did he turn around. Zak was fighting the golden Elite with the energy sword he had stolen, and was doing it well. The two blades met seven times before Zak got behind the Elite and took him down. John was about to ask something, but Zak ran off to help a Marine with another Elite. John sighed as the fighting stopped and a dark skinned man reported, "Area secure, Sir. We should keep moving. How bout that door?"

The Chief headed to the one open door and kept moving, even though he wanted to keep an eye on Zak, who was near the back. There were a few guards in the corridors, which he took down easily enough, but something didn't feel right. That's when he saw it. There was a patch of the wall ahead of him that was warped out of shape. _Camouflage... _John stopped, bent down, picked up a discarded plasma pistol, and charged it up. When it was fully charged, he fired at the invisible Elite, and saw its shields flicker; but much to his surprise, the fully charged blast didn't take them out. The alien lunged and brought John down with a thud, shooting repetitively with its rifle.

The Marines kept shooting, but its shields, still, did not falter. That's when he heard someone yell "move!" and the firing stop. Before

he knew it, the Elite was sprawling across to the other side of the hall, minus its helmet and shields gone. John looked up and saw that Zak had kicked the Covenant warrior across its face. It stood up and growled, showing its fangs, but then a look of horror crossed its alien features as it saw Zak charging, energy sword drawn. He cut its head clean off and got a spray of violet blood on his face.

John stood up and stared along with the Marines as Zak walked back over. Some of them said things like 'whoa' and 'that's just plain freaky' and stepped out of the way. Sergeant Johnson crossed his arms and said, "Kid, you scare me sometimes. And you got blood on your face. Use this." He held out a handkerchief and Zak took it, laughing and saying 'thanks'. He wiped his face, but the blood wouldn't come completely off, leaving two bluish smudges under his eyes. Johnson told him to keep it when Zak was about to give the hanky back.

The Chief sighed and went through the other door, which lead into the shuttle bay. There were a lot of Covenant and it was about fifteen minutes before the main fighting stopped. One of the Marines wondered aloud, "Is it over?" just as two Hunters and a lot more Covenant came out of a door. The men started shooting as the Master Chief got behind one of them with his sniper rifle and hit a bullet into its orange flesh, killing it. As the dead Hunter's brother charged at him, he hastily tried to reload, but didn't have time. Just as the large alien was about to smash John's skull, a beam of yellow-green energy hit it and it fell to the ground, motionless. He looked up to see who fired and saw another Hunter standing there.

POV Change - Zak

The Marines were about to fire on it when I ran in front of them and shouted, "Roy! I told you not to-" I cut myself off with a frustrated growl. The Marines lowered their guns and one raised an eyebrow and asked, "Wait... That's Roy? You mean that big guy?" I nodded and sighed, and then looked over to Franky and the others (Stan was now on Franky's back). They nodded and turned into their Covenant forms as well.

"Hold your fire." John held up his right hand, as one of the men was about to shoot. "These are the same Covenant from Alpha Base. They're friends." The man lowered his gun and said, "If you say so, Chief." I crossed my arms and Roy lowered his gaze, saying, "Oops..." As the Master Chief and the Marines started to head towards a door that Cortana had accessed for us, Franky smirked and said, "Oops is right. Now they'll be suspicious."

The fighting continued along the way until they reached a cell room. It seemed far too quiet for John's liking so he picked up a plasma grenade, triggered it, and through it into the center of the room. Sure enough, there were too camouflaged Elites that got caught in the blast, getting killed by the blast. The Chief went on to a platform and pushed a button on a holo-panel, opening the cells. He went into the nearest cell and helped the man inside stand up.

The man sighed and said, "Coming here was reckless; you two know better than this... Thanks..." I assumed he was talking to Cortana and the Chief and that this man was Captain Keyes. He turned to the group of Marines (which had increased some from the men in the cells) and shouted, "Marines! Lock and load your weapons; let's be ready to move." They all said 'yes sir' and got any gun they could find. Keyes

put his hands behind his back and continued. "While the Covenant had us locked up in here, I overheard the guards talking about this ring world. They call it Halo."

"One moment, Sir." Cortana's voice came in clearly. "Accessing the Covenant battle net. According to the data in their networks, the ring has some sort of deep religious significance. If I'm analyzing this correctly, they believe that Halo is some kind of weapon. One with vast, unimaginable power."

The Captain scratched his chin and muttered, "Yeah that's true. The Covenant kept saying that, whoever controlled Halo controlled the fate of the universe."

Cortana continued, "Now I see. I had intercepted a number of messages about a Covenant search team scouting for a control room. I thought they were looking for the brig of a cruiser that I damaged during the battle above the ring. But they must be looking for _Halo's_ control room."

"That's bad news. If Halo is a weapon, and the Covenant gain control of it, they'll use it against us and wipe out the entire human race." He turned to John and said, "Chief, Cortana, I have a new mission for you. We need to beat the Covenant to Halo's control room. Marines, let's move." He picked up a needler as John said, "Sir, perhaps we should finish _this_ mission first." Keyes let out a short laugh and said, "You have a point." We ran out of the room and I followed...until something caught my eye...

POV Change - Mater Chief

"Chief, what's with the kid and the four strangely armored Covenant?" Keyes asked as if noticing Zak for the first time.

"It's a long story; I'll tell you later."

"We should get to the shuttle bay and call for evac." And that's what they did. Fighting their way through. Half way there, Cortana signaled out to Foehammer. "Cortana to Echo 419. We have the Captain and need extraction on the double."

"_Negative, Cortana. I've been engaged my Covenant air patrols and I'm having a tough time shakin' em. You'll be better off finding your own ride. Sorry."_

"_Acknowledged, Foehammer. Cortana out." _She hesitated and then continued, "Air support is cut off, Captain. We need to hold here until she can move in."

"Oh, man!" a Marine shouted. "We're trapped in here! We're screwed! We're screwed, man!"

"Stow the belly aching, soldier." Captain Keyes ordered. "Remember you're a leather neck." He then turned to John. "Cortana, if you and the Chief can get us into one of those Covenant drop-ships, I can fly us out of here."

"Yes, Captain." The AI replied. "There's a Covenant drop-ship still docked."

"Alright. Lets go, Marines!" Keyes and the Master Chief led the soldiers through the corridors and into the shuttle bay. Cortana reported that the drop-ship was ready to go as the Chief opened the hatch. Keyes nodded and said, "Right. Everybody mount up; let's get on board." The AI told him that she would interface the ships controls, but the Captain declined and said, "No need. I'll take this bird out myself." Two Hunters appeared and the Captain rammed them.

A Marine whooped and said, "Nice one, Sir!" as Keyes smirked and said, "Time for a little pay back." It was about five minutes till anyone noticed something wrong. Five minutes till anyone even asked. It was Private Sally Tashjian who asked the question everyone was dreading... "Hey, uh, Chief... Where's the kid?" No one spoke, but the silence answered all their questions...

4. Someone Else

CHAPTER 4 - SOMEONE ELSE

POV - Franky

This was bad. This was very bad. Zak wouldn't budge from the Covenant computer and he wouldn't tell me what he was doing. Even when I told him that the marines had already left, he just shrugged and went back to his work. Stan kept looking around nervously and Steve would persistently tell us that we needed to leave. All of us knew that if we were spotted, the Covenant would start asking questions. I heard a slight hiss from behind me and I turned around, towards Zak. A coil had come out of the computer and he held it in his hand. Even though I was sure I already knew the answer, I asked anyway, "Zak...what are you doing?"

He turned around finally and grinned slyly. "I'm going to take back what belongs to me. I'm taking back my memory." He yanked the coil farther and grimaced slightly as he slid it into the port at the back of his neck.

I was about to stop him, but I stopped when uncertainty hit me. If I stopped it, would I hurt him? Would it take MORE of his memory? But if I didn't, could something come through BESIDES his memories? Or maybe even awake something already in him..? There was a sniffing sound coming from down the hall and Roy shifted from one foot to the other, saying, "Franky, someone's coming."

"Stay out of their way. Use your camo."

Something wasn't right. Zak's voice sounded different; altered. I started turning around, not wanting to take my eyes off the hallway, but wanting to face my friend. "Zak, we have camo, but YOU don't. We have to stick together. We can't let the Covenant get you. What if- Where are-?"

"Above you." I looked up, and sure enough, there he was. There happened to be a sort of grid and narrow shaft above us, and Zak was on the ceiling by holding on to the grid and having each foot holding place in the shaft. I stared up at him and he grinned. "Stay out of the way. I'll deal with them." I was about to argue, but he made a face and I gave up. I looked to the others and nodded. We switched on

our camo and waited in silence.

POV Change - Zak

They had no idea. I had a feeling that Franky new something had changed, but definitely not how much.

The sniffing got louder and two Grunts appeared from another hallway and I listened to their conversation.

"Napa! Stop your blubbering!" said Grunt number one. "You know that if one of the Sangheili saw you, they'd have your head!"

"I know, Jager, butâ€|" the Unggoy named Napa sniffled, "â€|they killed Gaara! Those stupid humans killed my brother!"

"Yes, I know. But we _all _lost ones we cared about today. Besides, it wasn't just humans. They say theâ€|" he looked around to make sure no one was listening, and continued, "â€|they say the _Demon _was here also. _He _took out most of the troops. There's a rumor that the _sacred one _was here, too."

Napa stopped sniffing and questioned, "Do you really think so?" clearly interested. I didn't give the other Grunt time to reply. I jumped down and grinned at them, eyes narrowed. Jager screamed and started running away a fraction before Napa did, as I ordered, "Stay where you are," and they froze, shaking in fear. I walked towards them and tapped the first speaking Grunt on the shoulder, smirking as he jumped. "You, _Jager, _will announce my arrival to the commander of this ship. Now, go. I'll be waiting. As the two Unggoy scuttled off, I turned around to face where Franky and the others were hiding. I smiled. I could smell their fearâ€| They knew.

POV Change â€" Franky

I knew it! I _knew _something like this would happen! I should haveâ€|I should have pulled out the wire when I had the chance.

As I thought, something didn't exactly go _into _him, but awakened something _within _him. Back on Earth, Zak's twin sister had told me that when he was born, Lord Azriel (the lord of the Dimension of Death, where spirits are to be judged. Zak's parents happened to be on business there when his mother had given birth to Zak, his two brothers, and his sister) placed a sacred seal onto Zak's soul. She said that when Zak's heart had stopped beating (he died at birth, but then came back), he passed between the world of the living and the world of the dead and came in contact with an ancient spirit called the Darknessâ€|

Weeks earlier, before all this happened, I had noticed that Zak was acting a little strange, butâ€|I never thought it would come to this. This person standing in front of me was not Zak. This thing was evil.

POV Change â€" Zuka 'Zamamee

Soâ€|the boy had come willingly after all. I wondered why, after all this time, he chose to stop running away. We had lost many in trying to capture him, even a well-respected Fields Master. I walked down the corridor with four of my Sangheili brothers behind me, along with

the two Unggoy who reported to us. All seven of us were in camouflage, and I gripped my rifle tightly. This could be a trap. None of us knew for sure. We turned the corner and there he was, leaning against the wall with his arms crossed, head bowed, and eyes closed. Our pace slowed to make less noise, but it was useless. Without even looking up, the pale boy gave a quiet chuckle and said, "Hello, Zuka."

I flinched. Not only did I not appreciate being called by my given name, but also it was almost impossible for him to know we were coming, more or less know I was among them. Sighing, I turned off my camouflage, as did the others. I took a step forward and announced, "You are to come with us. The hierarchs would like to see you."

The boy stepped away from the wall and faced me, saying, 'That's fine with me,' with a mischievous grin. He seemed different; something about this boy wasn't the same as before. He seemed to be a completely different person. But it wasn't until I looked into his eyes that I noticed the real change. I couldn't hold my gaze there, for I saw Death reaching out for me. His eyes were no longer the pale green they had been, but cold, black holes into a dark nothingness. He laughed coldly as I looked away and started walking before anyone else did.

POV Change " Master Chief

"This is bad! This is bad! This is very, very bad!" Cortana panicked as the Pelican headed away from the Covenant cruiser. "How could we have lost track of him so easily? Wasn't anyone watching him!" She didn't give anyone time to answer. "We have to go back. We need to go back to the Truth and Reconciliation and find him!"

"Cortana," the Master Chief sighed, "you need to calm down. Our first priority is to get the captain to safety. Zak's extremely skilled and strong. Besides, he's got his friends to help him out. He'll be fine until we can get there."

The AI was about to argue when Captain Keyes cut in. "Actually, Chief, I think Cortana's right."

"Sir?"

"Cortana told me everything she knows about this Kumashiro kid, and the way I see it, he's more important than I am right now. Who knows what'll happen to him if the Covenant get to him? I know this Darkness stuff sounds kind of crazy, but what I saw while being held captive" I'm starting to believe" They've got at least two Prophets aboard that ship, and I have a feeling that they know more about Zak than we ever will." He paused and gave a deep sigh, then turned to the Master Chief. "Foehammer can drop you and Cortana off, and then bring me back to the base." John was about to argue, but stopped when Keyes gave him a stern look. So that's what they were going to do. They were going to try and save me"

POV Change " Zak

I was being escorted to the throne room by the seven Covenant, including Zuka, who had come to retrieve me. Apparently, there just

happened to be three Prophets aboard this ship. _Oh, goodieâ€¦_ I noticed that the two Unggoy were shaking and the four Elites would look at me from time to time with uncertainty. Then I looked at Zuka. It seemed he refused to look at me now. I smiled at this fact and decided I wanted to know what was on his mindâ€¦

I still do not understandâ€¦ Aside from his strange featuresâ€¦this boy _seems _humanâ€¦_ Could he really be one of _them? _He seems normal enoughâ€¦but when I touched his arm before, I did not feel skin as I should have; I felt fireâ€¦_ Butâ€¦_

He must have noticed me, because he stopped and looked up. The Sangheili looked strait at me and I returned his gaze, sending, _You'll see, _into his mind. I grinned as his eyes widened and he looked away again.

I heard a slight rustle from behind and let the corners of my mouth turn up a bit. So, Franky and the others decided to follow after all. They were doing a very good job at keeping their presence a secret. I was impressed at how much their stealth skills had improved. We then came to a pair of larger doors and the two Guard Elites glanced at each other as the one to out left stepped forward. "State your business." He turned to me and narrowed his eyes as I grinned coldly. "And who is _he?" _

'Zamamee also took a step forward and countered, "We are here to see the High Prophets, as ordered. _He _is the one they wanted."

The guard's eyes widened and he took a step back, saying, "_He _is-?"

"He _isâ€¦_" The guard looked to me and I narrowed my eyes, still grinning, showing my fangs and forming a deep growl in the back of my throat. He looked back at Zuka, sighed, stepped away from the door, and nodded to the other guard. The doors parted and opened up into a room that was both wide and long (_very _long). There were Elite High Honor Guards lining the pathway, and there were, all the way in the back, were the three Prophets. _Well, well, wellâ€¦_ Franky and the others are seeing a Prophet for the first time. And three rather _important _ones, as a matter of fact. _

They were Truth, Mercy, and Regret. I walked forward with my arms crossed and felt my tongue slide across my fangs. The continuous murmur and stares from the ones around me only fueled the fire within. _They will seeâ€¦_ They will _all _seeâ€¦_ _Regret raised a hand and all the talking stopped except for his own. "Zak. What an honor it is to have you here at this time."

Honor?

_Why is it an honor to the Prophets that _he _be here? Is he not human?_

_The boy does not bow. Is he so important that even _that _is excused?_

The boy looks so human, but I know he is not. Besides hi inhuman features, there is something elseâ€¦ It is his scent. It is so familiar, though I cannot place it._

I smirked as I listened to the thoughts buzzing around the room and let my hands rest at my sides. "No, no. I am honored to be here at the finding of the first Halo."

Truth's mouth formed a barely noticeable smile as he said, "I see you have changed much since we last met all those years ago on the human planet called Reach."

"Seven years can have its effects." There was a long silence. Seeming as though the universe was holding its breath with absolutely no noise besides the low hum of the lights. Truth held my gaze; he was the only one that would, and I admired that. All else were afraid the darkness in my stare would swallow them whole and never let go. "But," I continued, breaking the silence, "as you should know, the change is not complete. And it's happening more rapidly than planned. I can barely control it."

"Of course. We knew this would happen all along. Just for that, a solitary room has been prepared for you to continue your metamorphosis."

"I see." I knew my expression had grown solemn and I bit my tongue, tasting the warm, red liquid from the wound, and then feel it heal itself up. Truth ordered the same group of Elites to lead me to the "solitary room" where my transformation would take place. Now, all stared; especially Zuka. This time, it was his gaze that never faltered. But I didn't care. The only thing I could think about was what Truth had said. They had known. They had known all along that my transformation would go out of control. My eyes narrowed at the thought. Why was I not told earlier? What was he planning?

The guards led me to a door and stopped. I walked into the semi-large room and leaned against the nearest wall, still biting my tongue. One of the four Elites was about to say something, but I commanded the door shut with my mind, and it did so. It was about a minute of waiting before I felt the stab of pain from within and was forced to my knees. To lessen the struggle of the change, I tore off the tattered, black shirt I was wearing and discarded it to the side. The temperature in the room rose and I cringed as I felt the seven long spines come out of my back (three each just the three ports down my back, two near my shoulders, and two more just below) and I felt warm liquid drip to the floor. Bones crunched, shape changed, and I felt the flames growing inside of me. The fire-resistant armor formed around my limbs, and I knew the transformation was complete.

POV Change " Zuka 'Zamamee

Four cycles had come and gone, and I grew tired as I stood guard. I was just stifling a deep yawn when I noticed a hot glow coming from the door. Molten metal fell from it and the door crashed outward, filling the hallway with thick smoke. Thinking an explosion had occurred, I ran to the opening to find the source, but stopped short when I heard a deep growl from within the room. The smoke cleared and my eyes widened. What stood before me looked much like one of my brothers, but jagged horns came from its brow, and it had spines similar to that of a Lekgolo's. The skin of this creature was a grayish brown, like my own, but seemed cracked in places where a dim, fiery glow resided. Its eyes had the same light, but held a chilling darkness deep within. His armor looked much like my own, but seemed blacker than night with an orange colored lining, and its shoulder

plates spiked up, andâ€¦ Then I noticed it. On the left chest plate, there was a symbol I had seen many times before in the ancient scripturesâ€¦ It was the sign of Di'Ani; Lord of Darkness.

POV Change â€" Zak

Some parts still hurt, but I pushed the pain aside and thought about the task at hand. I was about to head back to the throne room when I noticed someone to my right. _Zukaâ€¦ _He was down on one knee, his head bowed. "You areâ€¦trulyâ€¦the oneâ€¦" I made a slight _hmp _noise and started to walk away, but he continued, "Are you truly that boy?"

A long silence enveloped the area, and I did not turn before answering. "I _was _that boy, Zuka 'Zamamee. Make no mistake about that. And at this rate, I never _will _be _again." _

POV Change â€" Mater Chief

John had a bad feeling; a large knot was forming in the pit of his stomach. Cortana was still bickering about how the Pelican was moving too slow, and he was beginning to agree. Something wasn't right.

"Sir?" Foehammer's voice came in over the speakers. "I'm picking up data from an unknown sender. I'm not sure if it's safe or not. Cortana, can you try and figure out what it is?"

"Yes," Cortana said as she appeared at the back of the Pelican. "It appears to be some kind of AI."

"Covenant or human, Cortana?" Keyes asked.

"Neither, Captain. I can't figure out who the sender is; the data structure is like nothing I've ever seen before. Would you like me to bring it through?" Keyes grunted in acknowledgement and Cortana's hologram faded. When it appeared again, she was not alone. What stood beside her appeared to be a man. This man had _one _black angelic wing, blond-spiked hair, blue eyes, dark-clad armor, a tattered blood-red cloth that covered up the lower half of his face and draped down his back, and what appeared to be an overly large sword wrapped in bandages.

"I am the AI called Cloud. I was sent here by Zak's friends."

_That _got everyone's attention. Sergeant Johnson was the first to speak up. "Well, I'll be damned. Zak has his own personal AI and didn't tell us about it. So, _Cloud, _'the fucks been happening over there? Is the kid ok? Did the Covenant find him?"

The male AI's expression darkened and he sighed, saying, "I'm afraid I have some bad news." They all held their breaths as Cloud paused. "The Covenant didn't find himâ€¦_he _found _themâ€¦ _I'm aware that you have all been told about the prophecyâ€¦ I have to warn you that the legend is true. Zak had a very powerful figure from the Covenant, among other legends, sealed within his body called Di'Ani; meaning _darkness. _That darkness has awakened and he is extremely dangerous. He's not himself anymore. He's someone elseâ€¦"

"Hold on â€" hold on â€" hold on!" Johnson shouted. "You're saying

that all that _Darkness _mumbo-jumbo was _true!"_

The armor-clad AI lowered his gaze and sighed, "I'm afraid so. If you're planning to-."

"I knew it!" Cortana cut him off. "I _told _you that we should have turned around _sooner, _but no! Now the Covenant has Zak, and who _knows _what they're doing? They could be torturing him!"

"Well, Cortana," Cloud said, crossing his arms, "you don't have to worry about that. If they even _considered _that, they'd be dead before the second thought."

POV Change â€" Zak

This body felt good; much more fitting than the humanoid form from before. As I flexed my newly structured muscles, the urge to kill was growing and I took in a deep breath, smelling fear. I walked down the vacant halls, knowing that all but the guards still resided in the throne room. When I neared the door, the Honor Guards tensed, but I did not slow my pace.

Who is this? He is like no creature I have seen before.

Fool. Do not question. Look at his eyes; he has the blood lust. And did you not see his chest plate? There; the mark of Di'Ani.

_Impossibleâ€| _

I neared, and the guards parted, opening the doors. The chatter stopped and silence filled the room once more.

Who is this?

What of the boy?

He's scaryâ€|

Look at that symbolâ€|

_Di'Ani! But is that possible? _

_Di'Ani, have you come to deliver us, your brothers, from out cruel fate that is soon to pass? _

I slowed my pace and looked to the right; the direction of the last thought. _A Sangheiliâ€| _An _old _Sangheili. This ancient Elite was cloaked in brown, his head slightly bowed and his amber eyes staring right at me. I blinked once, and he was gone. I quickly shook off my feeling of uncertainty, thinking, _It was nothing; just a side effect of the transformation. _I was just passed half way when Truth spoke. "I assume that your transformation was successful? And that you can now change shape at will?"

I nodded and cringed slightly, changing shape as I walked. The change was much faster than before, and I now padded along on all fours in the shape of a wolf. I grinned, showing my razor-sharp teeth and the crowd shifted uneasily. _Just watch thisâ€| _Then I was, once again, on two feet; returning to my human form.

"That second form," said the Prophet of Mercy, speaking up for the first time since I had arrived, "the furred one, was one of the three spirits that reside in you, was it not? The wolf, along with the crow and the serpent."

I nodded, changing back to my true form as an Elite general rushed in and bowed. "Hierarchs, the humans have returned, along with the Demon. Requesting permission to gather more troops."

"Granted," Truth said. "I'll allow you bring in more of your warriors, but you must let Zak come with you. I'm sure he's wanting to test out his new abilities." My eyes narrowed at the fact that he had used my human name, but I nodded. I was looking forward to fighting the Master Chief. This would be fun.

End
file.